Chapter- 7

Sports Programs on Indian Television: An Analysis

7.1. Sports programs on Indian television

Sports news on Indian television started as part of a news bulletin introduced in 1965. With the increase in the news time on television, the volume of sports news also continued to increase, catering to the expectations of the expanding sports loving population in the country. In due course of time, the volume and nature of television news programming changed and so also the sports news content. Doordarshan was the only channel until 1992 and its news bulletin was composed of different genre of news content including politics, crime, business and sports being incorporated at the end of the bulletin. TV presenters like Suneet Tondon, Pronnoy Roy, Neeti Ravindran and Ved Prakash made a benchmark in presenting the news in objective manner and set high journalistic standards. Sports news was a part of news bulletin in which all the updates of sports, regional as well as around the world were presented. A special program on sports during 1980s was also aired named ‘The world of sports’ on Sundays, 4.30 PM. The program featured sports news mainly cricket, hockey, latest of athletics, football, tennis and other indoor games. There was no sensationalisation of news stories and no special attention to any game was given as mainly the happenings of the game were presented. Controversies, news related to players’ personal life and other features hardly found time in the bulletins. In 1988, India Today group made the first foray into television news with its program ‘News Track’ initially distributed on video cassettes. Then in 1995 a daily news bulletin called Aaj Tak was introduced on Doordarshan with aggressive reporting. The program became so popular that a 24 hour news channel was launched on the same name i.e. Aaj Tak. It changed the dynamics of the Indian TV journalism including sports reporting.

7.1.1. The discovery of cricket

The first cricket-specific programme titled “Turning Point” was launched on Indian television during the 1999 World Cup. Star News conceived this programme, roping in former Indian captain Bishen Singh Bedi as a resident expert in which English batting legend Sir Geoffrey Boycott came in as guest appearance. Turning Point,
however, was not a regular programme and its telecast discontinued with the completion of the cricket World Cup. Television news in India till late 1990s focused only on news related to politics. Coverage of cricket was only a part of sports news, presented as a small capsule at the end of every news bulletin.

The face of sports reporting in India started to change with the launch of Aaj Tak in 2001, the channel that aggressively tapped into the cricket passion in a bid to establish itself. There was a series between India and Australia two months after the launch of the channel, AajTak started a programme series titled *Kaun Banega World Champion?* (‘Who Will Become World Champion?’). It was a daily half-hour show in the evening that ran throughout the duration of the month-long series and presented peak coverage on match days. There was a deviation from the set pattern of presentation of news and the channel interrupted its regular morning news bulletins to give air time to a programme that was designed to look at the prospects of the game. Not only this, its news programming would also halt at every break in the game thereafter – lunch, tea and drinks – when specially hired cricket experts in the studio would discuss the day’s play threadbare. To grab the attention of cricket lovers, Aaj Tak also introduced the then unusual concept of a text graphic on the top right hand side of the television screen displaying the cricket score live. It was an effort for tempting the news viewers who might be drawn to watch cricket instead to stay on and watch the news while keeping updated with the score. The channel altogether covered the series as a mega-news event like the general election or the annual union budget. According to Uday Shankar, the then AajTak editor, they were not trying to look at the game the way experts see it, but from the perspective of a common man. AajTak’s strategy paid rich dividends and its rise as a distinguished Hindi news channel drew much from the manner it piggybacked on cricket’s tremendous popularity. By the next series, special programming for cricket became a norm for every channel with discussion and comments from experts. The sports news in this era was sensationalized by use of aggressive language. Every match was portrayed as a battle between the two countries whose teams were playing on the field. Statements of the players were repeatedly broadcast to add the spice in the news report. Personal life of players especially cricketers and their connection with bollywood was highlighted.

Before the 2001 Australian tour, not a single news channel had a separate sports show. But in deep contrast, the mid-2007 witnessed, every news channel had at least
one programme dedicated exclusively to cricket. The two NDTV channels – 24X7 and India – have weekly one-hour programmes, Cricket Controversies and Kissa Cricket Ka [A Story of Cricket], devoted exclusively to cricket the whole year around, irrespective of whether cricket is being played or not. Soon, sports news became a regular feature of television news programming in India. With growing intra-media and inter-media competition and the attempts to venture into new areas of human endeavor through news programming, sports reporting got increased attention of the news channels. With the gradual commercialization of sports, exclusive sports channels appeared to exclusively report numerous sporting events. Today, a lot of media outlets are reporting sports to keep the sports lovers informed and entertained through a cluster of sports programmes. Following is an analysis of TV programs dedicated to sports on different news channels:

DD News a popular Hindi channel of India relays Khel Samachar every day at 1 pm and 11 pm. The program encapsulates all the latest happenings of the world of sports. The national channel provides information about every sporting event in its 30 min bulletin, the program style is not interactive or caller based but it simply reports the events being held a day earlier. The language of the anchor, of course, is journalistic.

DD News also telecasts Sports News in English every day at 3 PM in which all the sport updates of the world is presented in a 30 minute program. The bulletin follows objective style of reporting without sensationalizing the stories. The presenter sets a high standard of sports journalism.

Sports Quarter is a telecast on the channel Headlines Today, features latest of the world of sports. The look and feel of the programme is vibrant and sporty; the anchors are young and direct. Sports news from around the world is packaged into a half-hour show, giving the viewer’s updates on cricket, tennis, football and athletics.

NDTV 24x7, a popular English language news channel of India relays Turning Point on match days. A call-in show in which one of the most famous commentators of cricket, Navjot Singh Sidhu discusses crucial turning points of the match was. Viewers are allowed to ask their questions and comment on the performance of players. The programme is exclusive for cricket.
NDTV 24x7 also telecasts *Sports Top 10* every day which showcases best sports action of the day. The best goals, the best wickets, quirkiest moments; the top 10 of everything in sports is presented.

*The Game* aired on news channel News X, every day at 6.30 PM boasts itself as the most comprehensive sports show on Indian television. It presents latest sporting action, sports personalities and trends.

*IBN Sports* is telecast at 7.00 PM daily on the channel CNN-IBN. The 30-minute sports show discusses and analyzes all the exciting sport stories, results and performances. This programme encapsulates the latest sporting actions and news of the day. (Fig 14)

![CNN-IBN Exclusive: Imran Talks Cricket](image)

**Fig 14: A still from program IBN Sports telecast on CNN IBN**

CNN IBN also showcases *Sports Tonight* every day at 11 PM. Briefings of all the sporting activities throughout the day are presented in the journalistic fashion. Special reports covering the burning issue or controversy is exposed. Every sport is discussed but cricket gets special attention.

Hindi news channel India TV presents *T-20* every day at 7.58 AM. A 30-minute sports program but obsessed with cricket, such that the name of the program denotes
the faster and shorter format of the game. Though the focus is on the cricket but other events are also covered in quick and crisp manner.

India TV (Fig 15) also presents *Chak de Cricket* every day at 6.58 PM. True to its name the program discusses the on and off field news related to cricket and its players. Sometimes former players like Kirti Azad and Atul Wasan are also invited to add expertise in the show. During the matches female models are also invited to host the show.

![Fig 15: A still from the show Chak de Cricket on India TV](image)

The channel Aaj Tak shows *Sports Programme* every day. 'Sports Programme ', as subtitle itself knows that this show is all about the fresh updated news from the sports arena around the world. This show features all national and international sports news, sports awards, sports personalities and latest sports oriented news from each and every corner of the world.

Hindi news channel Zee News relays *Sports News* every day. This is a special news series for sports covering all the happenings of the world of sports in a 30-minute show. The reports are supported by the visuals and critical appraisal of the
performance of the players and controversies clouding the game is discussed. This is not a caller based show.

Hindi news channel NEWS 24 shows Sports 24 every day. A special news bulletin dedicated to sports in which all the sporting activities around the world are presented. Special attention to cricket is given because of its proximity.

NDTV India, a Hindi news channel, shows Khel India every day. The program features the latest happenings of sports around the world. Special reports are supplemented with visuals and the anchor discusses every twist and turn of the match. Though cricket is the main focus of the program, other sports also find their places in the bulletin.

7.1.2. Exclusive cricket programs on Indian television

NDTV 24x7 shows Turning Point which is an interactive caller-based show with celebrity expert (Navjyot Singh Sidhu) on match days.

Cricket Controversies on NDTV 24x7, a weekly one-hour audience-based show with Navjyot Singh Sidhu as celebrity guest highlights the controversies related to the game of cricket.

NDTV INDIA presents Googly which is an interactive caller-based show with celebrity expert (Navjyot Singh Sidhu) telecast on match days. Kissa Cricker Ka another weekly one-hour audience-based show with Navjyot Singh Sidhu as celebrity guest.

Aaj Tak presents The Wisden Show which is a caller-based show with celebrity experts (Madan Lal and Saba Karim) presented on Indian match days, before/after play and during each break.

ABP news (formerly Star News) telecast Match Ke Mujrim, an interactive kangaroo court with celebrity expert Bishen Singh Bedi acting as public prosecutor against poor-performing players on match days. Another former player acts as defense lawyer. The case is judged by viewer’s polling.
CHANNEL 7 presents *Show Down*, an interactive caller-based show with celebrity expert (Ajay Jadeja) on every match and pre-match day. *Speedster Challenge* is another weekly game show formatted to select India’s fastest bowler.

ZEE NEWS presents *Ghamasan* which is an interactive caller-based show with celebrity expert (Chetan Chauhan) on every morning and evening of match day.

INDIA TV showcases *Cricket Xtra*, a ten minute commentary every hour on match days by Chetan Sharma.

![Fig 16: A still from the show Silly point telecast on Sahara Samay](image)

Sahara Samay (Fig 16) relays *Silly Point*, an hourly show on match-days with former cricketers Maninder Singh, Kirti Azad, Ashok Malhotra and Javagal Srinath as guests.

### 7.1.3. News programs and their profiles on sports channels

Fourth Umpire (Fig 17) telecast on Doordarshan is a caller based show on match days. Dedicated to cricket the show is hosted by Charu Sharma and cricket experts. Former Indian women cricket team skipper Anju Chopra also features in the show. The proposed team selection, the toss, the strengths and weaknesses of the two teams...
ready to showcase their talent on the field is discussed prior to the match. Post-match discussion and important highlights of the match is also presented at the end of the program.

![Fourth Umpire telecast on DD Sports](image)

**Fig 17:** Indian women cricket captain Anju Chopra discussing the game on Fourth Umpire telecast on DD Sports

*Dial C for Cricket* on the channel Neo Prime (Fig 18) is a must stop destination for cricket lovers, comes up with a refreshed look and feel along with loads of new features to make the show even more enticing to viewers. The show introduced new formats to its viewers such as the Big Interview where viewers get to post their questions to their favorite cricketers and get answers from them.

*Friday Fan Night* – This program gives an opportunity to the fans to feature on the show and face-off on the issues of the day. They also get to hold their own question against the cricket experts.

*Dial C on the ROAD* – schools, office or any establishment can invite Dial C team to them and program is telecast on the network. The crew lands up there and conduct the Dial C show at that location as per invitation.
Cricket Central on the channel Neo Prime, provides full package of cricket news from updates, features, interviews to gossip across the world. The punch line “if cricket is your religion this is the temple you need to come” holds true for the programme.

Sports Zone on Neo Sports features sports update, highlights, features, reviews from across the globe. Special features interviews with the sporting heroes of various sports are showcased on weekends. This is the only show of its kind to focus on Indian sports and sports persons.

Encounter, featured on the channel Neo Prime, showcases the nail biting encounters in the history of cricket. These are classic matches which are dramatized, and anecdotes the dramas behind the scenes. Each match is treated like a real story – with a beginning, middle and an end, punctuated with its dramatic twists and turns along the way that ends in an exciting finish. The narrative is anchored by genuine former and present stars of the game who lend a face to the slot.

Balle Baaz, telecast on Neo Prime showcases the best performances of Indian batsmen peppered with a unique filmy twist. The spotlight is on a great performance...
by a different batsman each week. Indian batsmen are portrayed as bollywood heroes and programs are titled as Dhoni’s Dhamakas, Ganguly’s Dadagiri, the Sabse Bada Khiladi- Sachin, Yuvi- The prince and Dravid-The Wall only on Ballebaaz.

*Baat Aur Bowl*, telecast on Neo Prime, showcases off the field avatars of favorite cricketers. Candid interview hosted by Vineet Malhotra provides fans to know about personal lives of their favorite cricketers.

*Jaya He*, relayed on Neo Prime is a gift to fanatic Indian cricket fans. In this show India never loses. 100 % victory is guaranteed. It showcases the victorious Team India in a dramatic manner.

*The Great Indian Run Chase* featured on the channel Neo Prime, re-creates the same excitement of chasing, dipping into the archives and dishing out some of those great matches where Team India chased and conquered.

*Tour Diary* broadcast on Neo Prime is the one and only cricket travelogue presented in India. The Tour Diary team led by VJ Archana Vijaya follows the Indian cricket team as they play their matches all across India against their international opponents. The show comes out to be an eclectic fusion of sights and sounds of exotic destinations all across India coupled with the excitement of a cricket match with crazy fans, quirky characters and of course the cheerful cricketers.

*Dial S for Sport* broadcast on the channel Neo Sport, represents the focus that Neo Sports has on sports other than cricket. The show features sportspersons, sports experts, administrators and others connected to various sports. The discussions centers on different issues surrounding the various sports – hockey, tennis, golf, football, badminton etc. It also gives a chance for sports lovers to interact directly with their sporting icons.

*Cricket Tadka Marke* telecast on Neo Prime is cricket with a dash of spice. The show explores fun light side of cricket. Hosted by the Archana Vijaya, the show focuses on crazy fans, gossips about cricketers, fun trivia and other happenings in the world of cricket.

*Men Once More* presented on Neo Prime is a weekly one-hour request show anchored by the popular VJ, Archana Vijaya. It provides an opportunity for cricket
fans to witness their favorite cricketers in action and relive some glorious moments of
the past. The fans could request a clip which can be a great knock or a match winning
spell of a bowler or even an interesting war of words between two players. Viewers
can request for their favorite clips by calling or via email. There is also “The Vaseline
Men” segment where every week one player is featured and one special knock is
showcased. The request of the week wins a ‘Vaseline Men’ gift hamper chosen by
Archana. The show is telecasted every Saturday.

*Star Power* broadcast on STAR 1,2,3,4, hosted by Manish Batavia, presents full news
and updates of the sports world in a dashing style. Usage of music and graphics make
it a full entertainment package for sports lovers. Although the program does not
focuses on cricket but famous personalities of the cricket world like Wasim Akram
and Sanjay Manjrekar are invited as guests. Discussing the performance of players
and teams, the show is a total revamp of old sports news bulletin.

*Jai Ho* presented on the channel Ten Cricket, rewinds the glory of Indian cricket team
and presents the matches which India won in a style of story. Famous journalists like
Ayaz Memon and cricketers like Ramiz Raja tell the happenings of the old match and
highlight the heroics of Indian players during the course of the match. Highlights of
the action and interviews of the players are presented simultaneously.

*Countdown to kick-off* relayed on Ten Action, hosted by Joe Morrison with John
Burridge (known as “Budgie”) and Carlton Palmer. The show is dedicated to the game
of football and its latest happenings.

*Extra Innings* telecasted on Set Max: with the advent of IPL and exclusive TV rights
to this channel Extra Innings takes the match telecasting to the next level. The show is
an instant hit thanks to the jovial apparatus set up by the cheer leaders, the DJs, the
drummers and glamorous hosts. The title song of the programme is full of music and
dance that seems more to be promoting a song and dance event than a cricket show.
The cricketers are portrayed more as models seen shaking a leg with skimpily clad
swirling women. The show seems to have perfected the right mix of spices to lure all
and sundry by bringing together talent and glamour. Unprecedented in itself, this
programme surpasses all levels of glamorizing the game of cricket. Gaurav Kapoor
and Samir Khochchar are two main anchors while cricket experts like Waqar Younis,
Navjot Siddhu and Ajay Jadeja join them at the studio. The show also connects co-
hosts who flaunt at the venue taking live interviews of the players just after their performance. Female VJs and models of different other channels are hired to add the appeal in the show. Below are some photographs of Extra Innings T20 which will describe the blend of cricket, glamour, music and bollywood—a perfect recipe of entertainment.

Fig 19: Hosts of the popular show Extra Innings telecast on Set Max

Fig 20: Female anchor Karishma Kotak taking interview of cricketer Pragyan Ojha
Chapter – 7

7.2. Trends in reporting of cricket on Indian television

All these programs mentioned above mushroomed after a popular Hindi news channel paved the way in using cricket as a money earning material. Almost all the programs have same style of reporting a sporting event. To make the story sensational, perimeters of objectivity were breached presenting light and entertaining news. Sports journalism is all about providing some extra material for the listeners or viewers to cheer on again for the event whose result is already known to them.

There are some changes in reporting of sports by this visual medium which need to be discussed separately.

Sets of Shows: earlier in the Doordarshan age the studio set up used to be sober with absorbing colours. Although the studio set up of sports program such as the world of sports was colourful with logos of different sports imbedded on the front of the desk and behind the presenter on the wall, but the sets of programs these days are eye catchy, with lots of graphics and photographs planted behind the presenter. Usually the set of the program is designed to accommodate two to three presenters.

Fig 21: Bollywood star Sanjay Dutt on cricket show promoting his upcoming film

In the 80s, the presenters used to be mostly males setting a copy book decent style of TV journalism. Studded with lucid language and objectivity, the shows presented a
serious reporting of the events. In stark contrast, the shows on news channels these days see an increasing trend of including female anchors in the discussion panels. The ladies may not necessarily be experts of the game, yet their inclusion gives a boost to the glamour quotient of the show.

**Use of music:** shows during the doordarshan era started with a montage and music in background. As soon as the program began the music faded down and no music was used during the presentation of report or at any point in the program. The program was more of a serious presentation of hardcore news facts. On the contrary, the programs these days on the 24x7 news channels are laden with loud music and beats. Match reports are supplemented with music; even Bollywood songs are also used to add entertainment in a feature report.

![Image of cheerleaders](image)

**Fig 22: Cheer leaders in the show Extra Innings dancing on the bollywood tunes**

**Use of language:** The language used has become more and more experimental by including catch-phrases of the local dialect. The words may not fall in the ambit of serious journalistic parlance, yet they are used to make the issue at hand appear more interesting. Making mountains out of mole-hills has become the order of the day. Non-serious issues are presented as being very important through usage of heavy vocabulary. A match played between two countries is touted as a war, and the players
are supposed to be gladiators, who bear the responsibility of upholding the nation’s pride. The choice of words is made so as to make things appear grave and sensational. The language is replete with all sorts of figures of speech including rhetoric, metaphors, similes, hyperbole and idioms.

Categorization of sports programs on Indian Television

Graph:5 - Categorization of sports programs on Indian television

Results and discussion

Graph-5 decodes the categorization of the sports programs broadcast on the Indian television. The researcher found that out of total 41 programs taken into study 11(26%) programs on news channels and 4 (9.75%) programs on sports channel come under the category of bulletin type news dedicated to all sports. These programs are relayed regularly every day. The programs relayed on news channels under this category are: Khel Samachar, Sports News, Sports Quarter, Sports Top Ten, The Game, IBN Sports, Sports Tonight, Sports Program, Sports News, Sports 24, and
Khel India. The programs broadcast on sports channels under this category are Sports Zone, Star Power, Sports Center and Dial S for sports.

The sports channels relay only 3 (7.3%) regular programs which are specifically caller based are; Dial C for Cricket, Dial C on Road and Cricket Tadka Mar ke. There are 2 (4.8%) programs on News channels under this category naming Chak de cricket and Match Ke Mujrim.

The next category of programs is news and about cricketers under which 2 (4.8%) are broadcast on news channels and 4 (9.7%) are broadcast on sports channels. Their names are T20 and Silly point on news channels and State of cricket, Cricket Central and Baat aur bowl on sports channels.

The next category of programs is On-tournament discussions which also provide full package to fans by entertaining phone calls of the viewers while discussing the performance of teams and players. These programs are broadcast only on match days, under which 10 (24.3%) are broadcast on news channels and 4 (9.7%) on sports channels. The programs on news channels under this category are; The Wisden Show, Turning Point, Showdown, Cricket Extra, Chak De Cricket, Match Ke Mujrim, Googly, Ghamasaan, T 20 and Silly Point. The programs under this category on sports channels are; Fourth Umpire, Extra Innings, Countdown to Kick off and Tour Diary.

The programs meant for fanatic Indian cricket fans in which only the success stories of matches which India won are showed in a melodramatic way are popular on Indian sports channels only. The 24 hour sports channels, in order to increase their viewership, show only heroics of Indian Cricket team and ignores the dark side. There are 6 (14.6%) programs under this category broadcast only on sports channels naming, Encounter, Balle Baaz, Jaya He, The Great Indian Run Chase, Men Once More and Jai Ho.

There is one program on sports channel which is the only sports travelogue broadcast on television of India regularly on a sports channel named NEO Cricket.